CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Hike in Wheat Prices

870. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the price of wheat meant for sale in the open market has been considerably hiked by Government recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether this measures will not affect those people who are living below the poverty line and also increase their number considerably as most of the poor people are not having ration cards and depend more or less on wheat being sold in the open market?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (b) The open sale of wheat is undertaken by the Government through Food Corporation of India, as and when considered necessary, in order to exert healthy influence on the open market prices of wheat without jeopardising Public Distribution System. Keeping in view the wide gap in the market prices vis-a-vis open sale prices notified by the Government, to neutralise the freight element paid by Food Corporation of India in moving wheat from procuring areas to consuming areas and to reduce the subsidy burden in the open sale and to discourage the traders from making undue profit, the Government decided to increase the open sale prices of wheat with effect from 4.2.1997. The prices are now in the range of Rs. 4900/- per MT in Chandigarh to Rs. 7900/- per MT in Thiruvananthpuram.

(c) No Sir, the Public Distribution System is being streamlined with its focus on the poor who shall be issued foodgrains at specially subsidised price as per the guidelines issued for the Targeted Public Distribution System. The State Governments are required to identify the beneficiaries who live below the poverty line, issue special ration cards to them and make all arrangements for delivery of foodgrains to the beneficiaries in a satisfactory and transparent manner.

Vacant Posts of Members in Consumer Fora Resulting in Accumulation of Pendings Cases

871. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of consumer fora in the country, State-wise, set up during the last two years;

(b) whether it is a fact that the posts of members are lying vacant in such fora all across the country resulting into accumulation of pending cases;

(c) if so, the details available in this regard in respect of States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar; and

(d) the number of pending cases State-wise so far?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (d) The details regarding the State-wise total number of consumer fora set up since inception along with the total number of pending cases are given in the enclosed statement. (*See below*).

(b) As per the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 the responsibility for appointing the members in District Fora, rests with the State Governments. Accordingly States/UTs appoint members as and when vacancies arise.

Piling up of cases in consumer courts occur not only due to vacant posts of members but also due to a number of other reasons like frequent adjournments, lack of proper infrastructure facilities at the courts etc.

(c) As per the information furnished by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, out of 9 District Fora set up during last two years, 5 District Fora are yet to begin functioning as the post of